

God @ Ground Zero: How Good Overcame Evil . . . One Heart at a Time
Chaplain Ray Giunta with Lynda Rutledge Stephenson
Integrity Publishers, 2002

A Must-Read Book for Every Chaplain Service Member

Every Chaplain and Chaplain Assistant strives to understand what we do. For one thing, we want our vision to have a clear focus so we can establish priorities and manage our work effectively. Beyond personal or professional enrichment, however, we want to be able to answer questions from commanders, leaders, other airmen, and the public about why the military needs a chaplain service. *God @ Ground Zero* supplies us with a superb resource for understanding our work.

Chaplain Ray Giunta has spent nearly 15 years in professional crisis ministry following his career in law enforcement. He was actively involved after the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City as he had been in other major disasters. In *God @ Ground Zero*, he tells the story of his 68-day mission at Ground Zero, the rescue and recovery operation at the site of the former World Trade Center in New York City. In story after story, “Chaplain Ray” finds himself listening to bewildered individuals, sharing their tears, and even absorbing the rage some feel against God.

In this book, he underscores the importance of Critical Incident Stress Management training. He consciously and intentionally projects an image of spirituality by wearing a clerical collar and a hard hat with a large cross on it and shows why religious symbols are an important part of the work of a chaplain. He also combines an assertively religious style of caring with remarkable restraint from proselytizing those who seek his help. He demonstrates self-care in the midst of an overwhelming workload

and a high operations tempo, and he confesses how profoundly the trauma has affected his life, his sleep, and his dreams long after he has returned to his California home.

While some of the books written in response to September 11, 2001, may be judged as over-sentimental or trite, such adjectives definitely don't fit *God @ Ground Zero*. Instead, the book is thoroughly down-to-earth, a realistic account of the experiences of a crisis ministry expert in the most traumatic situation in recent American history.

In a scene from the motion picture *We Were Soldiers*, the wife of Lt. Col. Hal Moore finds the task of casualty notification thrust upon her because no chaplains have been assigned to sustain the families at her post. Astounded by these circumstances, someone asks, "Aren't there any chaplains to help with this?" *God @ Ground Zero* is just as effective in showing how essential it is for traumatized persons to be in touch with "a visible reminder of the Holy," whether they are victims, rescuers, or caregivers. Chaplain Ray Giunta demonstrates how to provide deep, solid, spiritual care without proselytizing vulnerable people.

God @ Ground Zero supplements the theory and training of Critical Incident Stress Management with spellbinding case studies in one chaplain's continuous narrative. Although the author is not a military chaplain, this is a must-read book for every member of the Air Force Chaplain Service who wants a deeper understanding of what it can mean to be "a visible reminder of the Holy."

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